From November 2016 (Volume 68)

November 2016...coming to the end of the year so I will include a few odd shots and unrelated comments as

I found an ordnance survey map that showed our croft on Eday in the Orkneys

Eday is one of the islands of Orkney, which are located to the north of the Scottish mainland and is approximately 8 miles long. One of the North Isles, Eday is about 24 kilometres (15 miles) from the Orkney Mainland. With an area of 27 square kilometres (10 sq. miles), it is the ninth largest island of the archipelago. "Eday" is a name derived from the Old Norse eið and means "Isthmus Island". This is a name specifically associated with economic activity used only where the isthmus has been a "route for the movement of goods.

Eday has been described as a microcosm of the habitats and landscape features that make up Orkney's North Isles. The elevated 'spine' of the island is covered in heath and bog and as the undulating topography descends shoreward, the more fertile lands are a patchwork of agricultural fields or 'parks' as they are called in Orkney. The island has a number of freshwater lochs, the largest of which is Mill Loch at the north end. Although none are abundant in terms of fish, they provide important habitats for wildlife

This time of year we always find a wonderful carpet of fungi around the wooded areas. They are sometimes so well camouflaged that they are difficult to spot

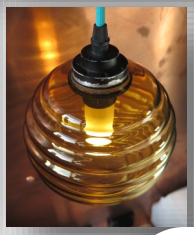
Photo History

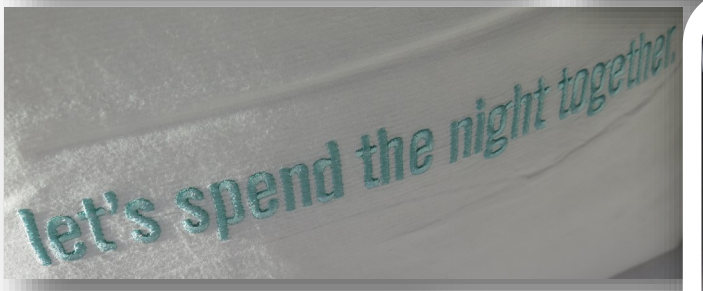
We went to Berlin in November to meet up with Almut, Ali and the boys, staying in the 25 Hour Bikini Hotel which was a zany hotel right in the centre and about 15 minute walk to Charlottenburg where the family live

The 25hours Hotel Bikini Berlin is located in the City West and is as wild as a jungle. The hotel showcases cosmopolitan Berlin at its location in the listed Bikini-Haus building between the Berlin Zoo and Breitscheidplatz designer Werner Aisslinger On the top floor is a 360° rooftop terrace and first-class views of the city and the Berlin Zoo.

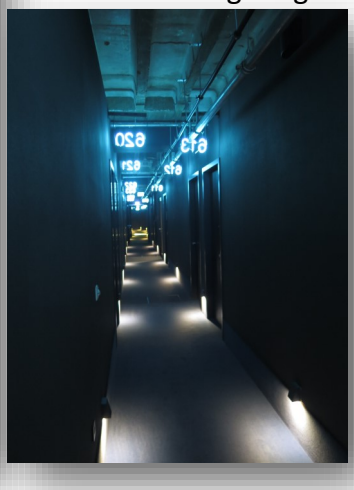
Reception

Ground Floor





Hotel corridor lighting



The Christmas market was set up all round the Church in the square

Lynn's favourite Eierpunsch (egg punch)..laced with alcohol

Freshly fried kartoffepuffer (potato fritters) with an apple puree topping

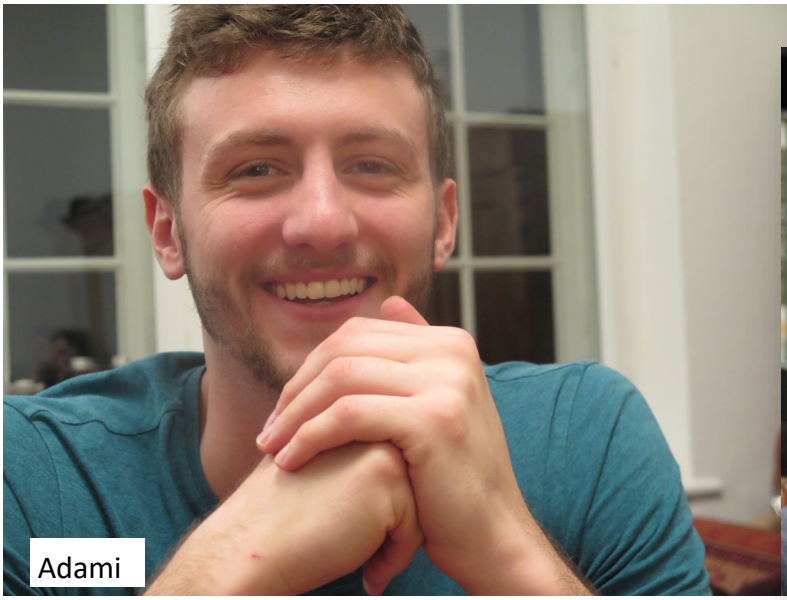
Around Berlin

At the lovely apartment — Schillerstraße 15 in Charlottenburg

Ali and Almuth

Ali

Sarah

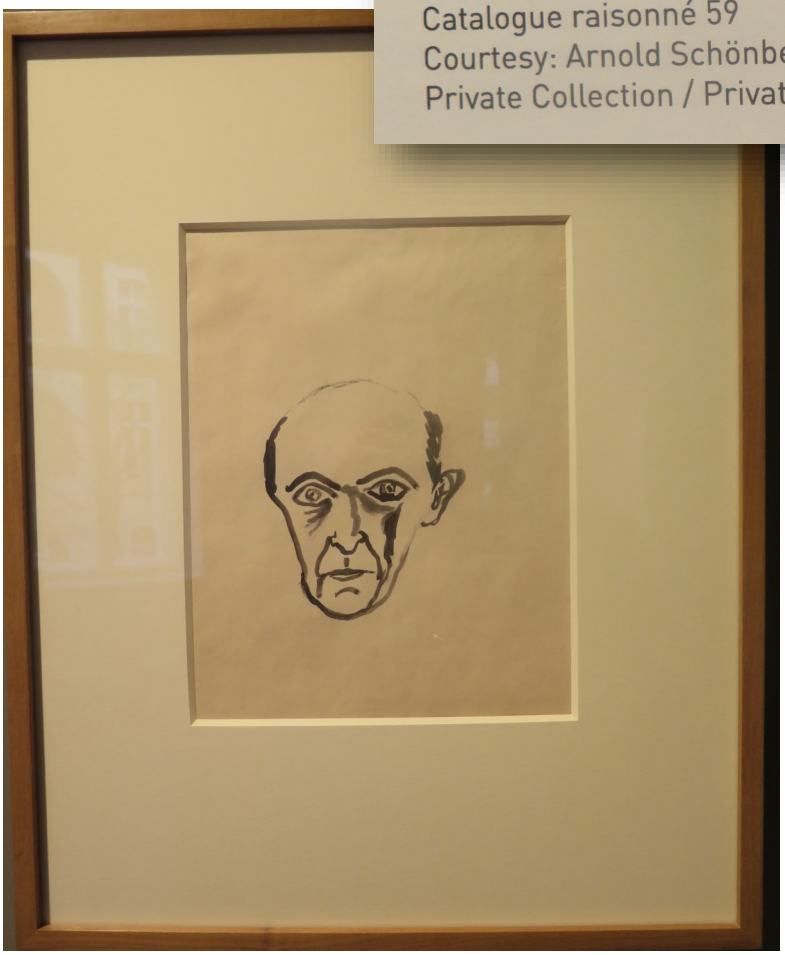

Adami

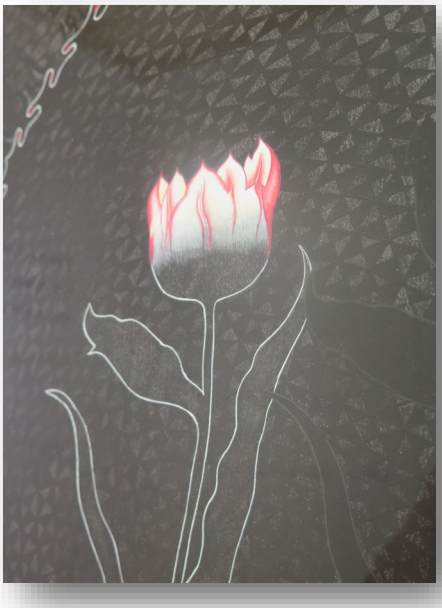
Manu

Almuth put on an art exhibition—'The Red Gaze'—at the Zilberman Gallery and she kindly gave us a personal tour

ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG
Self-portrait / Selbstportrait, 1944

Watercolor on paper / Aquarell auf Papier
27,8 x 21,5 cm
Catalogue raisonné 59
Courtesy: Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna / Wien &
Private Collection / Privatsammlung, Belmont Music Publishers





ALI KAAF
Rift M III, 2016

Ink and burnings on paper /
Tinte und Einbrennungen in Papier
150 × 110 cm

SARKIS
Icon 162, January 13, 2004 / Ikone 162, 13. Januar 2004

Chinese ink on paper, wrought-iron frame, Marocco (20th century)
Tusche auf Papier, Eisenrahmen, Marokko (20. Jahrhundert)
24,5 x 30 cm
Dated and signed on reverse / datiert und signiert auf der Rückseite
ID26913
Courtesy of Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris / Brussels

Alpin Arda Bagcik showed us his works in the gallery. He is the artist in residence

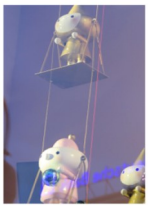
Coffee and cakes at Mosaique

Christmas Market

Potsdamer Platz as the Stage for Reunification

From the building of the wall in 1961 until its fall 1989, Potsdamer Platz was the widest point in Berlin's death strip, a massive wasteland. When the Berlin Wall fell on 9th November 1989, interest in the area awoke virtually overnight. After decades of neglect, a completely new situation had arisen. Just a few days after the decision to open the wall, a large section of it was broken down at Potsdamer Platz and a makeshift border crossing created on 12th November. In 1990, shortly after the wall opened, the former no man's land between Potsdamer and Pariser Platz witnessed what was then the largest rock concert in history. Amid the ruins of the wall, head of Pink Floyd, Roger Waters and his band played the legendary concert "The Wall".

It seemed somehow apt to follow the ‘wall information with a visual display of the opulence of KDW where the fashions and food hall were all up to such a high standard that it seemed to be the very antithesis of the recent history of the area



Located on Savignyplatz in Charlottenburg, the **DICKE WIRTIN** (Fat Landlady) has been a Berlin institution for decades and a student stronghold since the heady days of the 1960's demonstrations. The clientele is a mix of students and locals who come here to dig into hearty portions of traditional German homemade dishes.

Gansekeule (Gooseleg) with red and green cabbage & dumplings

Beef goulash with red cabbage & dumplings

Photo History

Anyone who knows me is aware of my fascination and involvement with IT and watching recent developments prompted me to indulge myself in a little nostalgia because so much has changed so quickly I suddenly thought that nowhere in my Photo History is a summary of the IT changes I have seen...I will now attempt to rectify that omission in the hope that anyone reading this in the future will see how developments in this field changed our lives, and more importantly, how quickly this happened

Once upon a time there was a young enthusiastic caterer who travelled far and wide seeing Kings and Queens across the land who were contemplating having parties for their princes and princesses. He came home tired to his small house in the woods where his loving wife had sharpened her quill ready to prepare the epistle to send by carrier pigeon back to the Royalty.

Ok, ok, maybe that's a bit of poetic licence but heck this is my story so humour me…

But it really does seem like a different world and business model then.

I drove , sometimes for over two hours, to see clients, spending possibly another two hours discussing their function and then two more hours back home. Then Lynn had to type the lengthy and detailed quote We used good quality paper which were inserted, with a variety of printed menus, into purpose-made folders to complete the attractive package. (I am only giving these details as all this was very quickly to be superseded).

We were proud of our state of the art 'golfball' typewriter which had removable printing circular heads (hence the 'golfball' name)

I had to dictate the letter, and as every function was different, It had to be done quickly so that I could recall all the specific requirements. We quickly realised that it would speed things up if I could type as well.

That was the start of my rapid welcome to the 20th century world of technology.

After a typing course at Barnet College I asked the lecturer for advise in purchasing a new typewriter and she suggested " a word processer".

My questioning face prompted her to take me on an expedition into a new world. A classroom full of large screens with towers and attached keyboards.

I was baffled. She proceeded to explain

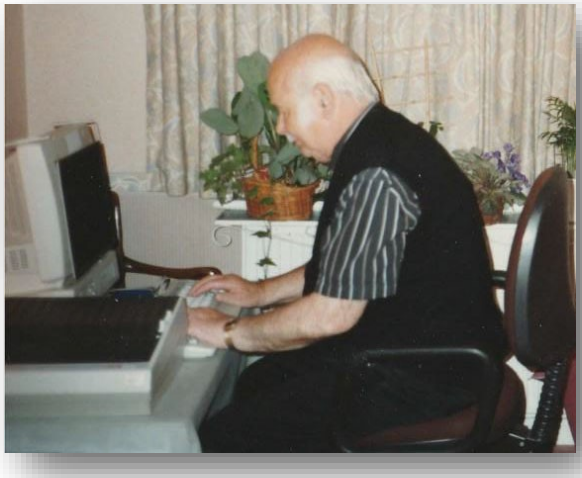
“ The letter you are writing appears on the screen and you correct it there before committing it to paper “

I immediately realised….no more carbon copies with flimsy copy paper and no more Typex which was used to remove mistakes (but always showed) and most of all….a speedier way of working.

I was sold on the idea and proudly bought an Amstrad . This had a 64 Kb memory and had no built-in operating system. Whenever I started work I had to put in the ‘Start Of Day Disc‘ which was a 3” floppy disc holding the DOS basic system. All our documents were stored on other floppy discs. Constant ‘Saving’ ones work was imperative as it was frequently lost and cursing the word processor became a spectator sport...

This was my first Amstrad with its small black & white monitor

The start of my IT life with its floppy disc. I think our throw-away calculators have bigger computing power now.



Dad inherited my Amstrad as I got ‘hooked’ on bigger, more powerful PC’s

Suddenly, I could have all my menus on disc….with no more printing costs. I could produce my own stationary, I could make revisions and alterations without major expenses and more importantly—with ease. Suddenly I could send out quotes without Lynn having to work into the small hours.

I was hooked.

Things changed very quickly. People were asking for my fax number and I said I used email. They didn’t know what it was and this sounds crazy now but I used it wherever practical from the early 1990’s.

The web started in the mid 1990’s and I engineered my first website using templates and a small amount of coding that I had picked up. It was a whole new area with the ‘dot-com’ bonanza in the late 1999’s

I think I was one of the first to use the .com after my company name emblazoned over our vans and clothing

In 1993 I opened Ralph & Co. I had a long list of menu items that clients wanted us to provide for their parties and of course this went ‘on line’.

Initially my web sites had animated gifs and lots of pages but the downside at that time was that although people were now starting to use the internet they all still had very slow pc’s, often with ‘dial up’ via the phone lines.

This was before broadband started so we had to reduce our content as people were (just like now) impatient . If they couldn’t view ones website they just went elsewhere.

I quickly realised that people would find my website using many of the available search engines such as Ask Jeeves, Lycos, Alta Vista, Yahoo, Hot Bot and Google and I taught myself a little about algorithms that were used at that time. As soon as I learnt a new trick like putting the search word' catering' in white on a white background they discovered it and you lost 'brownie points' for using it.

I still managed to keep really high on the lists and gradually Google was coming to the fore with its team of professionals who used 'spiders' to trawl the web and stopped me from getting high rankings. I then employed SEO (search engine optimisation) to keep my ranking high and after 13 websites I realised my work was better employed in catering than web-design so gave it over to the professionals but populated the websites myself so content was always up to date and I kept my finger on the pulse

The customer base had changed...Very small percentage now of private clients and much more corporate client work. The great thing now was that clients saw my site, saw what we offered, saw the price, so by the time they contacted me it was almost 'a done deal'. No more travelling to see clients prior to them booking.

Emails were now becoming more and more the way we communicated. The postal service got a well-deserved kick in the pants and the internet was now being used more and more.

When I opened Ralph & Co in 1993 the phone company messed up with my phone line and lent me a so-called 'mobile'. You will laugh at the description. It was huge ...two big cases and really heavy and had to be taken outside in order to get a very erratic signal. Lynn and I had phones after that and the term 'house brick' was well deserved.

I guess, like most things, it is easy to say in hindsight, what one should have done, but this was a whole new concept that no-one could have foreseen and developments now are so out of our sphere that one is frightened by the way things appear to be going. Progress can not be halted and it is often encouraged by governments, companies and individuals with a hidden agenda so one should be able to look at ALL the implications and then make a very considered judgement before accepting changes purely on the assumption that progress can not be halted.

Transparency is required but even that has its problems as privacy is required too.

Knowledge is power and if it is controlled indiscriminately it can be a most powerful tool for good and also for evil

I have often shown (in these books) how I hate the 'ever watchful CCTV and many people say that crime is stopped (or prevented) by the cameras. Hoodies and bad photographic images have shown that that is not the case. The UK has the largest percentage of surveillance in the world.

Some thoughts I have on the subject …

I feel that three areas will massively grow in the near future:

1) Apps and controls for home use eg where heating can be turned on remotely, temperature monitored, fire and carbon monoxide alarms triggered remotely etc etc. This is just the thin edge of the wedge. Many uses are for convenience and even I have a hidden camera triggered by movement that alerted us to a burglary as it was taking place. They still never caught the intruder though. However think more deeply.

2) There are many underused computers world wide and one can make use of this gigantic computing power very cheaply. Bristol, for example, has an enormous amount of available data such as traffic monitoring, public building heating , vulnerable people in care and they are in the process of 'joining up' the data with these super computers and the results even in these early stages are almost beyond our comprehension. They have experimented with a house where sensors will show the daily use of an individual (say with dementure problems) It plots all their activities and any unexpected movements (such as a fall) triggers alarms. Commendable concepts...but think of the implications if used with non-altruistic intent.

3) The amount of data available about us already is frightening. Google's ability to track all our movements and search history is just the tip of the iceberg. It is explained as a way to target advertising to be geared more precisely to individual requirements and is not of a personal nature but the very fact that so much is known about anyone is frightening.

   I have heard all the arguments in favour of this information bank...if *you are doing nothing wrong*

   what does it matter if everything is known about you. How naive can one be...That is a rhetorical question.

I feel it will get into the wrong hands and will be a force that will be used to control us...remember ...you read it here first.

Probably the fact that I have put my thought into writing has triggered alarm bells somewhere……..OR AM I BEING PARANOID…????

Sorry...I got off onto one of my pet subjects...this was supposed to have been about how technology has changed so rapidly in my lifetime ..in ways that could never have been imagined. I just feel one should step back and look at 'advancements' and instead of grabbing them with both hands we should question the possible more insidious uses that this new development could be used for.

A classic 'little example' that I remember was a very well used app on Android phones A host of torch apps come with some strange permissions, including the ability to delete apps, track location, tinker with bluetooth connectivity, view call details and write additional software to the phone, (The torch is now included as a standard feature)

Tens of millions of people had downloaded apps like the Super-Bright LED Flashlight or Brightest Flashlight Free without reviewing the permissions. Torch apps should only require a limited set of permissions to run – for example, around use of a device's camera, in order to use its flash to provide light.

However, developers are often asking for far greater power over a user's device, in order to collect data and sell it on to marketers and ad networks. It's the latest reminder that if you're not paying for an app, its business model may well involve selling your data. This is just a more 'innocent' extension of what I am alluding to.

Photo History

...well, after my little rant I have got that off my chest and will now continue with my 'Photo History'…...
Lynn and I try to get a park walk under our belt every day and this shot was as the sun was setting over Groveland's lake opposite in late November 2016

We watch out at this time of year for funghi and some of the great shapes and colours are often hidden away under fallen leaves. They last for a very short period so we consider ourselves lucky when we are able to get these shots

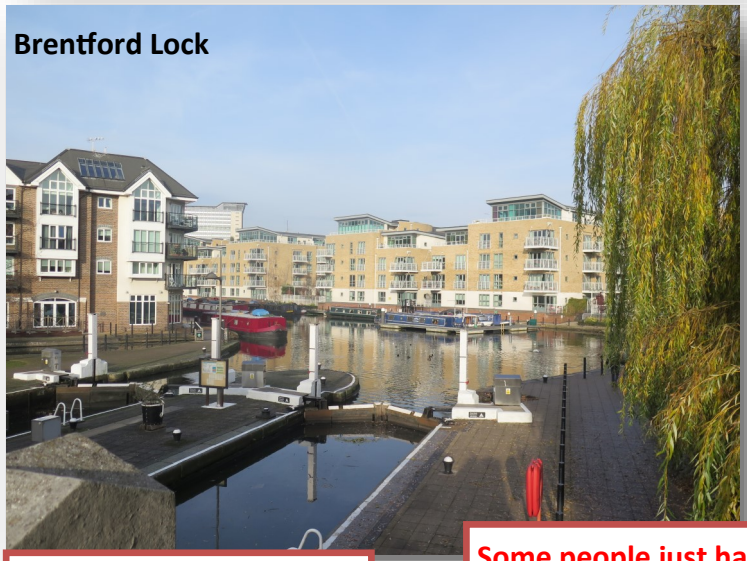
Sometimes the beauty of nature is right on one's doorstep and we are so used to our surroundings that we are oft en not aware it is there

Two essential requirements for the planned route:

1.Adequate toilet stops

2. Good ale at the pub

The Gentleman's Walking Club.. Christmas 2016 walk



Very smelly...but he soon got used to us

Some people just have dandruff on their shoulder

Ivor thought maybe the camembert was over-ripe

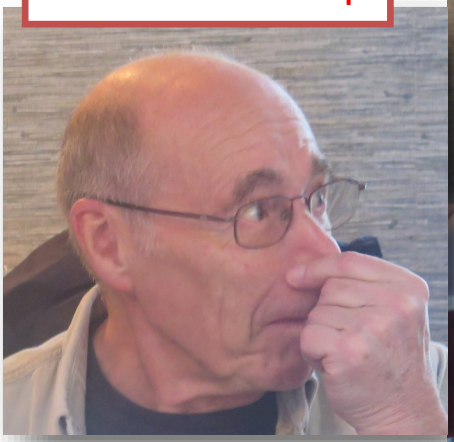


Photo History

Since retirement I have been aware of a 'not so gradual' increase in my waist measurement. After Lynn's outright denial that she was shrinking my shirts, I reluctantly accepted the truth, and commenced a daily swim (6 months now) plus Lisa, my personal trainer forcing me to complete a weekly workout...It does seem to be helping and I feel better..

Lisa arranged a Christmas lunch at a local pub and we thought she was trying to fatten us up and thereby drumming up more business. It was a great lunch with lovely company

We are really looking forward to Christmas and this year all the family are here so this is the relative sanity before everyone descends on us. We are organised and it is great fun planning it all.

I notice Lynn has her pre-Xmas traditional Baileys

The wonderful thing about where we live is its proximity to the centre of London and we love walking round and seeing new places, changing architecture and the lights at this time of year. I will try to insert some shots from other years to contrast how they have changed.

The steps down to The Regents Canal with cranes completing The Gasholders apartments. The dark building silhouetted against the night sky is The Ragged Museum. (It is also visible in the early shot above) See below two shots from 2013 before the Gasholders and Ragged Museum were developed

Ragged School from The Regents Canal

Ragged School

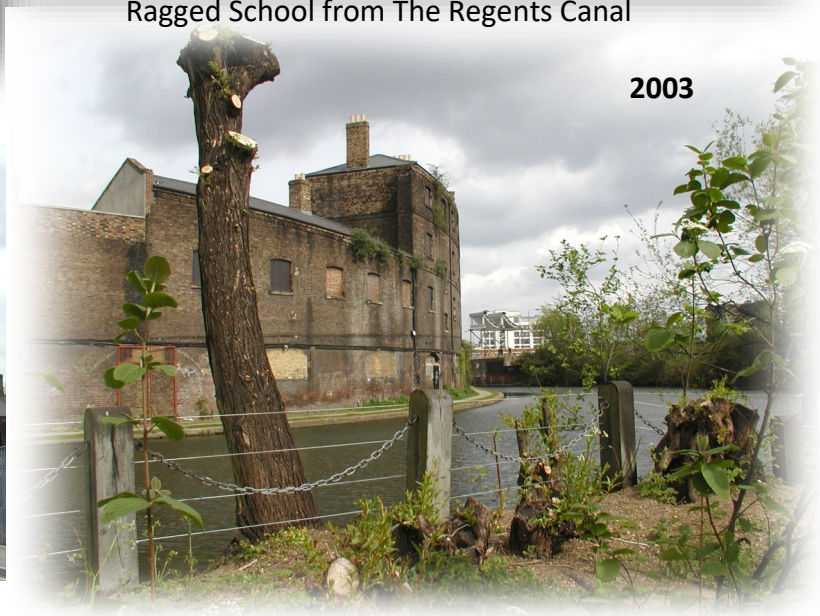
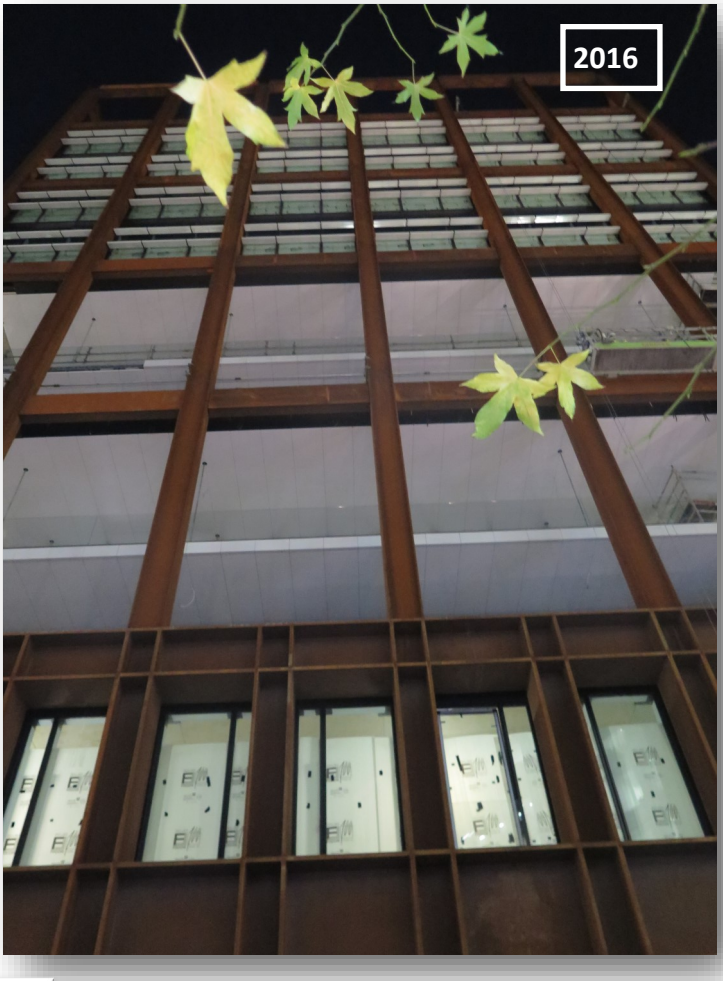


Photo History

Pancras Square as it was in 2013 (below)

and (right) still during construction now (2016)



GERMAN GYMNASIUM

Listed gasometers (below) prior to the Gasholders apartments being erected within the framework

The Giant Ice Cube in Pancras Square

Secret Santa working late

on “Elf and Safety”

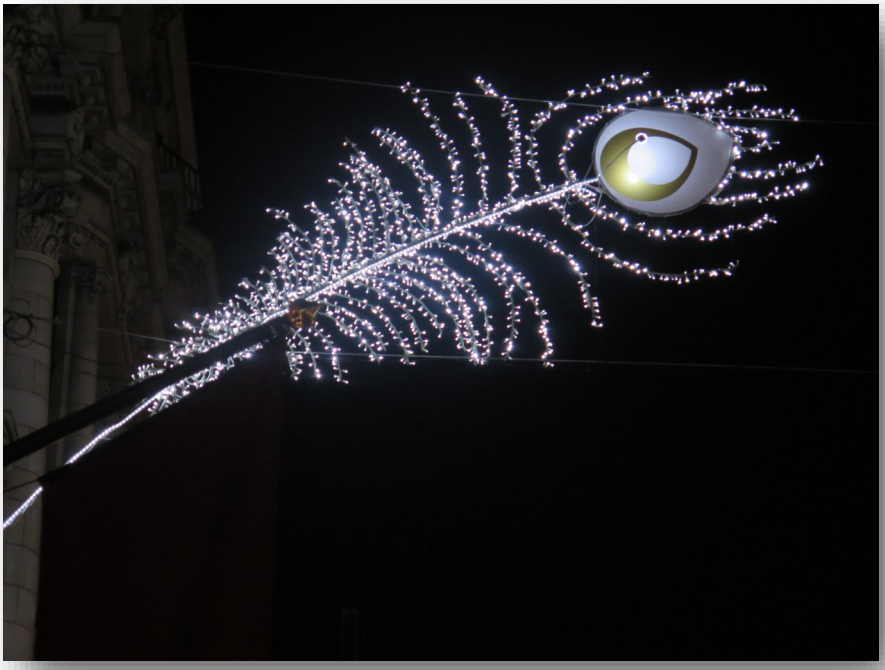
Pancras Square

Oxford Circus..

December 2016

Regent Street

BOND STREET



2008

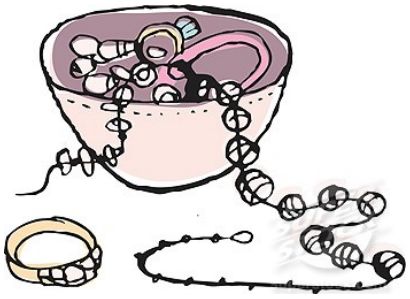
2016
ZILERI
ZZEGNA
BOSS
DOLCE & GABBANA

NEW BOND
STREET W1

...he asked Santa for a woolly jumper,
but got a do-it-yourself kit..

The beautiful Bond Street facades are wonderful when illuminated and often missed when we are driving

Ralph Lauren over the years

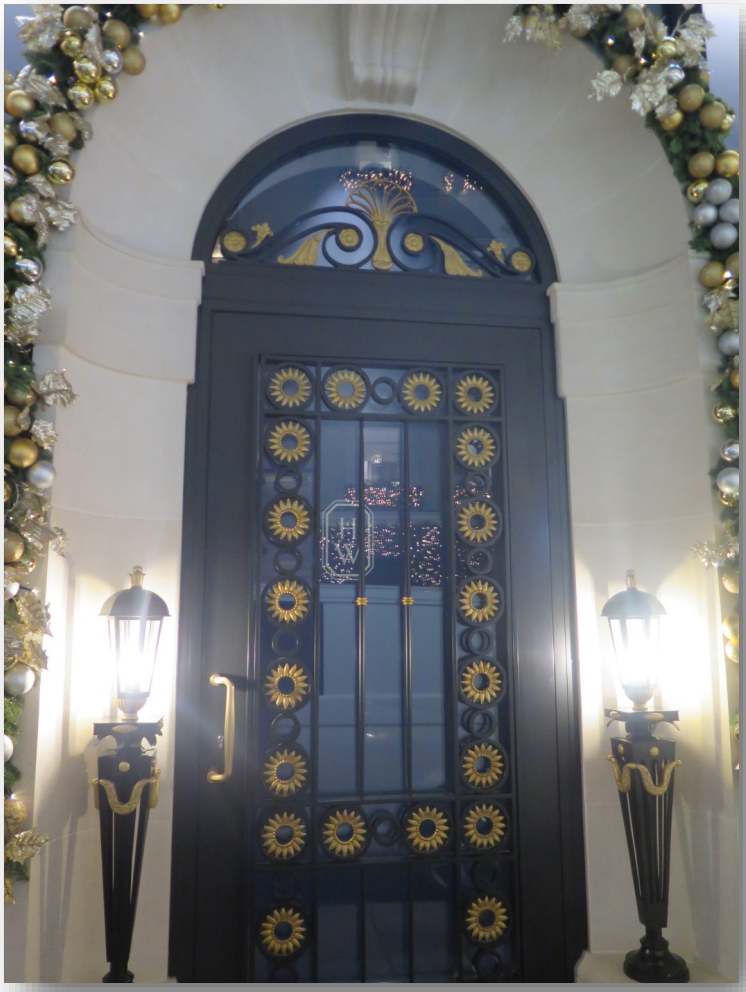


Price..High

Taste..Low

Opinion..Mine

Dior



Van Cleef & Arpels
GRAFF

Some window displays were even humorous

Il Svengle
Pur Amour

Cartier

DOLCE & GABBANA

Burlington Arcade

Piccadilly Arcade

Royal Academy

Fotnum's, where royalty buy their Xmas provisions, but behind the scenes lurks a more sinister aspect of how they distribute their accumulated wealth

FORTNUM & MASON
EST 1707

The beautiful Xmas tree and splendid light on the buildings at the junction of Pall Mall and Haymarket

Xmas party goers and pre-theatre go-ers congregating in St. Martin's Lane

Bill's, near Upper St. Martin's Lane and Longacre where we ended our Xmas walk with a great meal

We enjoyed the group singing in the cold square so we sent them a hot chocolate to revive them

Raplh and Lynn - thank you! What stars you are! That hot chocolate was wonderful and such a treat. It's a treat just to perform there and bring a bit more sparkle to one's evening! So glad you enjoyed it.

Have a wonderful Christmas and thank you again! Jules

The Get Gospel Team - *2015 BBC Gospel Choir Of The Year Finalists - watch us on* YouTube *now!*

Tammy & Ben treated us to a steam train trip from Paddington to Minehead in Somerset and on to Dunster by coach for a carol concert in the church. We had great food on board and it was a lovely (if long)

The table set for the Christmas dinner

North Devon Pipers and Drums welcomed us at Minehead Station

The beautiful church at Dunster

Last night the breaking news was of the terrible tragedy at Berlin Christmas market where we were 4 weeks ago. It was so vivid as we had chatted to the stallholders who were possibly killed in this unspeakably savage senseless attack on innocent people. I contacted Almuth to make sure the family were ok as Arnon had just arrived in Berlin yesterday morning

Lynn and I enjoying the market a few weeks ago

Such a sad way to end this album but I guess it accurately reflects the times we live in